

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 9, 2018

Agenda Item: W-Bar Conservation Easement

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background:

FWP proposes to pursue a conservation easement on 6,760 acres of deeded land in Wibaux County. This property comprises the largest intact parcel of Beaver Creek riparian habitat from its headwaters to the North Dakota line, encompassing over 11 miles of Beaver Creek and over 10 miles of Dry Creek and other tributaries. The woody draws on the property are impressive and numerous, offering critical winter cover for mule deer and whitetails (100% of the property is winter range for one or both species). The woody draws give way to shrubby hillsides and extensive native prairie uplands, providing excellent habitat for upland game birds such as sharp-tailed grouse, pheasants, partridge, and turkeys.

The diversity and quality of habitat are valuable for nongame species. The property could potentially support over 40% of the State Wildlife Action Plan Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Beaver Creek supports native and introduced game fish species year-round and serves both forage fish production and gamefish rearing habitat for the Little Missouri drainage. The size and quality of habitat make the property a high priority for conservation.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

FWP has not sought any public comment at this time. Upon endorsement from the commission, FWP would conduct appropriate negotiations, analysis, and public review processes.

Alternatives and Analysis:

Proposed Action: Pursue the W-Bar Conservation Easement to conserve an important property for wildlife and provide perpetual public recreational access while keeping the land in private ownership.

No-Action Alternative: FWP would forgo the opportunity to conserve and enhance valuable wildlife habitats with a willing private landowner partner. Wildlife habitats on the property may change through time to be less productive and there would be no guarantee of public access in the future.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommends endorsement by the commission, allowing FWP to proceed with further development of this conservation opportunity. A conservation easement would help ensure continued management for wildlife habitat productivity and public access.

Proposed Motion:

I move the commission endorse FWP's proposal to negotiate the W-Bar Conservation Easement and complete associated due diligence and analysis.